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**MARYLAND CRIME WATCH**  
 Maryland Crime Watch is a program of the  
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 Crime Watch.

# MARYLAND CRIME WATCH



## NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH:

ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD  
WATCH IN YOUR COMMUNITY.  
REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY  
TO YOUR LOCAL LAW  
ENFORCEMENT DEPARTMENT.

### NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM

#### I. Definition:

A program involving the joint efforts of the police or sheriff's department and the community, designed to enhance neighborhood security, heighten the community's power of observation, and to encourage mutual assistance and concern among neighbors.

#### II. Needs:

In recent years, neighborhoods have experienced rapid change. The old, well-established neighborhood has been replaced by a highly transient, growing community where people seek more and more privacy. This life-style tends to promote unfamiliarity with neighbors and a corresponding lack of concern. Unfortunately, this enhances the opportunity for the criminal element and increases the community's vulnerability to crime.

This condition dictates the need for a crime prevention program which will enhance neighborhood security, heighten the community's power of observation and encourage mutual assistance and concern among neighbors.

#### III. Objective of Neighborhood Watch:

The main objective of Neighborhood Watch is to reduce the incidence of crime by:

1. Increasing citizens' awareness of burglary and other neighborhood crime through a continuing information program. (Literature distribution)
2. Training citizens in the means of better property security and assist them in making their property more secure. (Operation Identification and Security Surveys)
3. Developing a neighborhood action program where neighbors help watch each other's property and report suspicious persons and activities to law enforcement agencies. (Neighborhood Watch)
4. Encouraging all citizens to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in reporting crime.
5. Enlisting each home/apartment/business in Operation Identification.

#### IV. Duties and Responsibilities:

##### 1. Neighborhood Coordinator

- a. Coordinates activities of Block Captains and Block Watchers participating in program.

- b. Recruits neighborhood residents into the program.
- c. Acts as a liaison with the police or sheriff's department and disseminates information communicated to them which may lead to the solution of a crime.

##### 2. Block Captain

- a. Hosts a Neighborhood Watch meeting.
- b. Personally visits each home/apartment/business in his/her block, announcing the meeting and encouraging neighbors to participate.
- c. Acts as a base station for Operation Identification. In this manner, neighbors can pick up Operation Identification materials from their Block Captain in order to participate in the program. The goal of 100% participation is essential in order to achieve the program objectives. The Block Captain is encouraged to personally contact those neighbors who have not participated in the program.
- d. Acts as a liaison with the law enforcement department and disseminates any information communicated to them which may lead to the solution of a crime.
- e. Distributes Crime Prevention materials to those residents who were unable to attend meetings.
- f. Cooperates and assists Neighborhood Coordinator.

##### 3. Block Watcher

- a. Acts as eyes and ears for their neighbors and reports any suspicious activity.
- b. Studies crime prevention materials furnished to them.
- c. Checks neighbors' homes when they are out-of-town.
- d. Cooperates and assists the Block Captain.
- e. Participates in Operation Identification.

This information was adapted from the Baltimore Police Department's Neighborhood Watch Brochure.

## WHAT IS SUSPICIOUS?

The effectiveness of a law enforcement department's crime prevention efforts is enhanced by active participation on the part of citizens. By calling to report suspicious persons or activity, you not only aid the police or sheriff you make your community a safer place to live.

Some people fail to call simply because they are not aware of activities that might be suspicious. Others may notice suspicious activity and hesitate to call for fear of being labeled a "nosy neighbor" or a "crank." Still others take it for granted that someone else has already called.

CALL 911 or your local law enforcement department IMMEDIATELY when you observe suspicious activity. DO NOT worry about "bothering" them. DO NOT worry about being embarrassed if your suspicions prove unfounded. THINK INSTEAD ABOUT WHAT COULD HAPPEN IF YOU DO NOT ACT.

## INFORMATION MOST OFTEN NEEDED

What happened? When did it happen? Where did it happen? Was anyone hurt?

**Description of Persons:** (Include clothing). When describing suspects, notice age, race, sex, height and weight. Compare your own weight and height with the suspects. Pick out some unique characteristics (scars, nose, jewelry, etc.) that will help you identify the suspect in the future if need be.

**Description of Vehicle:** License number, make, model, color, any noticeable damage and direction of travel.

**REMEMBER:** FOR POLICE ASSISTANCE DIAL 911 or the law enforcement department in your area.

## OBSVIOUS THINGS TO WATCH FOR

Basically, anything that seems even slightly "out of place" or is occurring at an unusual time of day or night, could be criminal activity. Some of the most obvious activities to watch for and report include:

A stranger entering your neighbor's house when it is unoccupied, may be a burglar.

A scream heard anywhere may mean robbery or assault.

Offers of merchandise at ridiculously low prices could mean stolen property.

Anyone removing accessories, license plates or gas from a car should be reported.

Anyone peering into parked cars may be looking for a car to steal or for valuables left displayed in the car.

Persons entering or leaving a business place after hours could mean burglars.

A sound of breaking glass or loud explosive noises could mean an accident, burglary, or vandalism.

Persons loitering around schools, parks and secluded areas could be sex offenders.

Persons loitering in the neighborhood who do not live there could be burglars.

Anyone forcing entrance to, or tampering with a residence, business or vehicle should be reported.

## SOME NOT SO OBVIOUS THINGS TO WATCH FOR

Not every stranger who comes into your neighborhood is a criminal by any means. There are many perfectly legitimate door-to-door salesmen, repairmen, and servicemen moving around our neighborhoods all the time. But criminals do take advantage of this by assuming the guise of legitimate business representatives. After all, if a criminal looked like a criminal, no one would have any trouble spotting him.

Check identification of all solicitors, meter readers, and repairmen prior to allowing entry into your home. Be suspicious of an alleged deliveryman with a wrong address or asking if someone else lives there. Some of the not so obvious things to watch for are:

### Someone Going Door-to-Door In Your Neighborhood

Watch for awhile. If, after a few houses are visited, one or more of the persons tries a door to see if it is locked, looks into windows or goes into a back or side yard, it could be a burglar. Such action is even more suspicious if one person remains in the front when this occurs or if there is a car following a few houses away. Call your local law enforcement department or 911 immediately; do not wait for the person to leave.

One or More Juveniles Walking Casually Through The Neighborhood Looking into Automobiles, Backyards, Etc.

A Person Running, Especially If Carrying Something of Value.

### Someone Carrying Property:

If it's at an unusual hour, or in an unusual place, or if the property is not wrapped as if just purchased.

A Person Exhibiting Unusual Mental or Physical Symptoms:

May be injured, under the influence of drugs or otherwise needing medical or psychiatric assistance.

### Human Traffic to And From a Certain Residence:

Is not suspicious unless it occurs on a daily or very regular basis; especially during late or unusual hours. It could possibly be the scene of vice activities or a fence operation.

### Any Person Taking a Shortcut Through a Backyard:

May have just broken into your neighbor's home.

Any Vehicle Moving Slowly And Without Lights or Following a Course That Appears Aimless or Repetitive in Any Location:

But particularly so in areas of schools, parks and playgrounds. Occupants may be looking for places to rob or to burglarize, or they could be drug pushers or sex offenders.

Parked, Occupied Vehicles Containing One or More Persons:

If it is an unusual hour they could be lookouts for a burglary in progress, even if the occupants appear to be legitimate.

Vehicles Being Loaded With Valuables if Parked in Front of a Closed Business:

Or unattended residence—even if the vehicle is a legitimate looking commercial vehicle. More and more professional thieves are taking the time and trouble to customize their vehicles with special signs in order to move more freely without suspicion.

Apparent Business Transactions Conducted From a Vehicle:

Especially around schools or parks. If juveniles are involved, it could mean a possible drug sale.

### Persons Being Forced Into Vehicles:

Especially if juveniles or females, may mean a kidnapping.

### An Abandoned Vehicle Parked On Your Block:

May be a stolen car.

Continuous Repair Operations at Non-Business Locations:

Could mean stolen property is being stripped, repainted or otherwise altered.

Open or Broken Doors or Windows at a Closed Business or Residence:

If owners are absent, could mean a burglary in progress or already completed.

### A Beam From a Flashlight in a Neighbor's Home:

Especially if they are away.

### Persons Wearing or Carrying Bloody Clothing:

Could be a suspect or victim of a serious crime.

### Persons Making a Quick Change of Vehicles:

May be attempting to elude the police or abandoning a stolen vehicle.

While some, if not all, of the suspicious situations described could have innocent explanations, law enforcement departments would rather investigate a crime-prone situation than be called when it is too late. Your call could save a life, prevent an injury, or stop a criminal act. BE ALERT!



Protect your home  
and property with  
**OPERATION  
IDENTIFICATION**

Operation Identification is a property marking program that has been successful in reducing or eliminating burglary and theft in communities where it has been properly implemented.

The program is based on the premise that items that are difficult for a thief to sell are less likely to be stolen.

It is easy to join Operation Identification and costs you nothing but a little time.

**FIRST** — List all your valuable property on the inventory form provided by the law enforcement department.

**SECOND** — Engrave your driver's license number on the property.

**THIRD** — Display the Operation Identification stickers on your doors and windows to warn the potential thief that all items have been marked for ready identification by Law Enforcement Agencies.

Contact your local law enforcement department for Operation Identification materials.